

have a more convenient season I will call for thee." We have no account that he ever had such a "convenient season" as that was, and because he did not heed the advice of St. Paul, he went to torment when he died. Oh, how dreadful to lose our souls when salvation is offered "without money and without price."

Ponder these things in your heart and I pray that you all may come to Christ while you are young.

D. C. MOOMAW.

The Sunday School

LESSON FOR DECEMBER 12

BY THE EDITOR

Paul's Last Words.—II Tim. 4:1-8, 16-18

GOLDEN TEXT.—I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, II Tim. 6:7.

LESSON THOUGHT.—There is but one way to prepare for death and that is to be faithful in life, ready for every good work.

Home Readings

- Paul's last words, II Tim. 4:7.
- Last words of Moses, Deut. 31:1-13.
- Joshua's exhortation, Josh. 23:1-11.
- Holding fast the truth, I John 2:18-25.
- Looking for mercy, Jude 17-25.
- Looking upward, Phil. 3:13-21.
- The crown of life, James 1:1-12.

Introductory Notes

During his first captivity Paul spent two years in Rome. Tho he was a prisoner, yet he enjoyed unusual liberties, living in his own hired house, communing with his friends and preaching the gospel to all who came to him. After his imprisonment very little is known of his life. It is generally believed however that Paul was released and that he made a tour among the churches he had established, and was again arrested and brought to Rome a prisoner, where he suffered a closer confinement and a severer punishment. If as is generally supposed he wrote his second letter to Timothy during his second imprisonment, then we are studying to-day the last words of the greatest man whose influence ever blest the Christian church. It is true he is in a dark dungeon, some of his friends have forsaken him, others are absent upon their Master's work. Only the faithful Luke is by his side to write these his last words. He is living in full expectation of death which may come to him at any moment. Notwithstanding these facts, his faith is not shaken, it only grows brighter and stronger as the time for his departure draws nigh.

Meaning of the Text

1. *I charge thee.* As if he said, I lay an obligation upon you as the authorized apostle of the Lord Jesus in the presence of God. *Judge.* A day of judgment is coming for all in which God's people will be vindicated. *The quick,* those living at the coming of the judgment, and the *dead* shall alike be judged.

At. R. V. by, thus introducing a new motive.

2. *Preach the word.* To preach means to proclaim, to herald forth. This act of preaching is distinctively a characteristic of the Christian religion. The Word is the message God gives to men thro the gospel truths. *Be instant.* Be earnest, sincere, and use every opportunity to preach the gospel. *In season, out of season.* Under circumstances favorable or unfavorable. *Reprove.* Convict men of error, show them their fault. *Rebuke.* A stronger word, meaning to blame with a decided dislike. *Exhort.* Strengthen, encourage.

3. *Sound doctrine.* Healthful, soul-nourishing teaching. This kind of teaching will not always be accepted. *Lusts.* Their own desires will bring together teachers who will please their itching ears.

4. *Turn away—from truth.* Not being able to endure sound doctrine they will be more and more turned from the principles of the gospel. *Fables.* Used in contrast with *truth*, hence the error and false teaching to which they listen and which has ensnared their souls.

5. *But watch.* R. V, Be sober and give the most diligent attention to thy soul and thy work. *Endure afflictions.* Suffer the hardships that may come in the faithful discharge of your duty. *Evangelist.* One whose special office is to preach the gospel. *Full proof.* Do thy work well and all of it.

6. *For.* Because my work is done. *I—ready—offered.* R. V, For I am already being offered. Paul was at Rome awaiting execution of the death sentence passed upon him by Nero. He knew that at any hour the tyrant's sword might fall. *Departure.* The word here used means the loosing of the cables that hold a vessel to shore until the moment of starting.

7. On this verse Hoffman says, "All three propositions denote the same thing. The second gives prominence to one particular form of contest, while the third clearly expresses how entirely Paul had done with life.

8. *Henceforth.* Literally, as concerns the rest. At the end of this life comes the time of rewards and crowning. *Crown of righteousness.* The just award of right living thro the grace of God. *Lord—that day.* Jesus is the one who shall vindicate all his faithful followers in the day of their judgment. *Love his appearing.* Those who patiently look for his coming when he shall bring his rewards with him. Rev. 22:12.

16-18. *First answer.* Better, first defence. That is at his first trial in the emperor's court no one took his part. Verses 9-15 show that most forsook him. But the *Lord stood with me.* Here was his joy and in this he could rejoice even unto death.

The Lesson Applied

1. *A Sacred Charge.*—Timothy was a young man and without such experience. Paul was aged and had an experience of more than 30 years in the Christian life. He

was therefore eminently qualified to give advice to one who was just beginning the Christian ministry. To Timothy Paul committed a sacred charge, but no more sacred than the charge God has entrusted to each one of us. Every disciple has a charge which he should hold sacred as a thing from God and for which he must give an account.

2. *Preach the Word.*—That which Timothy was to do above all other things was to preach the Word. Not his opinion about the Word, not speculations, not his own fancies or ideas, but the Word just as God gave it to him. This is what God says to us now. Never in the history of Christianity was it more important that ministers should be charged to preach the pure and unadulterated gospel of Christ than it is now. Paul declared that the time would come when men would not endure sound doctrine. That time has long ago come. Let the preacher and the Sunday-school teacher see to it that what they teach is the gospel and the gospel alone.

3. *Not Death.*—Paul had the right idea of what we call death. To him it was not death, neither did it have terrors for him. When the time came he said, "I am already being poured out," "I am ready to depart." He was ready to leave this world, to exchange it for another and a better. This is the Christian's idea of death. It is a transition, a passing from one world to another. Why then should death be such a terrible thing? It is not to the true Christian.

4. *Ready.*—In the strictest sense no one is ever ready to die; the longer he lives the richer will be his experience, the wider his field of usefulness, and the less ready he is to die. So far as one's work is concerned that is never done. But there comes a time when God takes home his faithful servant. Then what a blessed thing it will be if we can say with Paul. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

To Make You Think

1. Where was Paul when he wrote these words? 2. Why are they of special interest? 3. What sacred charge did he deliver and to whom? 4. Who was Timothy? 5. Why did Paul call him his son? 6. What five duties are enjoined in verses 1 to 5? 7. What reasons are given for fidelity? 8. For what was Paul ready? 9. How can we get ready for death? 10. Who are ready to die? 11. Is our work ever done here on earth? 12. What three things gave Paul great comfort? 13. May we make such a record? 14. What gives life a glorious ending? 15. What is death like? 16. To whom is it so?

The very beginning of a Christian life involves a confession of Christ. You cannot have fire without heat; no more can you have a true Christian fire in your soul without some warmth being felt by others. Public confession is essential for the perpetuity of this experience.—W. H. York.